

Brit.

4

40

4

4^o Brit 70²

OBSERVATIONS

Boil. 702

ON

Mrs. MACAULAY'S History of England,

(LATELY PUBLISHED)

FROM

The REVOLUTION to the Resignation of Sir ROBERT WALPOLE.

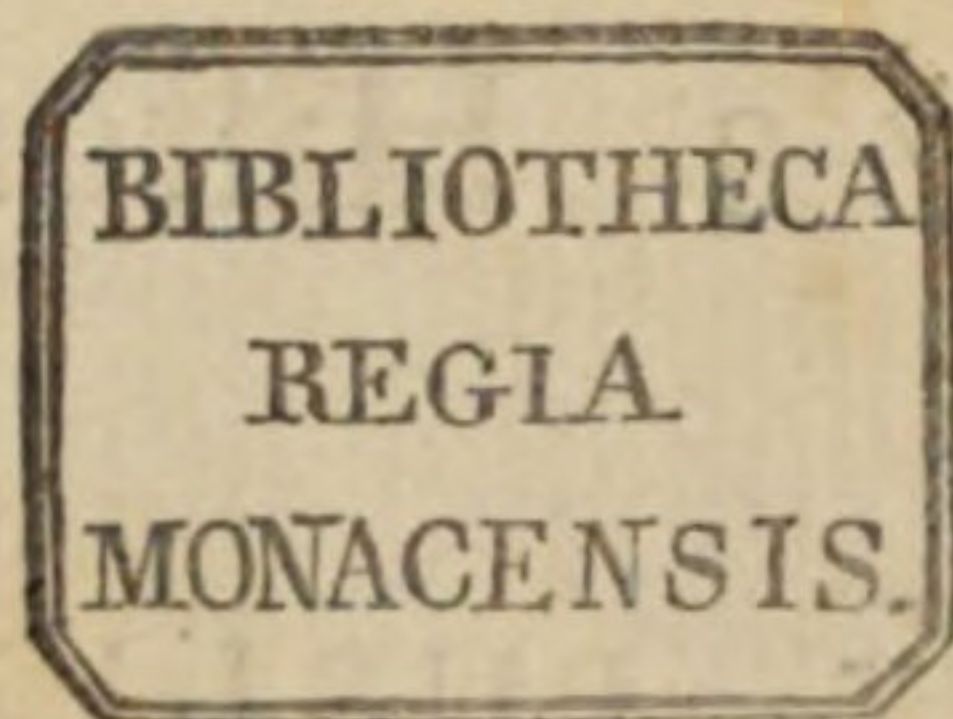
IN

A LETTER ADDRESSED TO THAT LADY.

By CAPEL LOFFT, OF LINCOLN'S-INN, ESQ.

L O N D O N.

PRINTED FOR EDWARD AND CHARLES DILLY, IN THE POULTRY.
MDCCLXXVIII.



A
L E T T E R
T O

Mrs. M A C A U L A Y.

MADAM,

AS the letter which now appears in print has the honour of being addressed to you, it would be in vain to dissemble the ambition of its author: but the public will probably think it reasonable to be informed on what motive the writer of this can have assumed those pretensions to notice which your name prefixed will imply; and for which the most candid reader, after perusing even the best parts of a performance so inadequate to the subject and design as that which is here submitted to the general view, may be at a loss to find a sufficient justification.

I must rest my cause however upon a simple state of the facts. A worthy patriotic gentleman, with whom I had very lately the happiness of becoming acquainted, having asked my sentiments on your late History in a Series of Letters to the Rev. Dr. Wilson, then just published, I

B

though;

thought myself under obligations to give those sentiments in a manner the least injurious of which I was capable: it obviously occurred that verbal observations upon such a work would be the easiest and most prudent in regard of myself, but at the same time they appeared to me not sufficiently respectful with relation to the much esteemed proposer of the question, and to the extent and importance of the question itself: in proposing which, though it was very apparent that an honour was intended me, yet as it came from a person whom I believed with reason not to design an honour to any one without thinking they did, or meaning they should deserve it, my desire was rather to appear weak or indiscreet, than negligent or ungrateful in the discharge of so high a trust. On reading of it he was pleased to express an opinion, which it would be improper for me to suppose ill-founded, since it was his opinion: and upon the deference due to that, I have been induced to publish those remarks, which had his private approbation.

Still it remains to be accounted on what reasons, after having resolved on publication, I could aspire to the distinction of addressing these lines to the Author herself of the History on which they remark. To this permit me to answer, that having the satisfaction not only to respect with the Public, qualities, to which I must not in this letter, nor can perhaps in any, give a proper and adequate title, but to admire the elegant, the amiable, the benevolent, in conversing, esteem was added to veneration; and under the joint influence of these impressions, the ambition confessed already prompted me to take this method, which the partiality of the same friend encouraged me to pursue, of

endeavouring

endeavouring to transmit myself to posterity as one who had attempted to express his ideas of Mrs. Macaulay's historical character; one who had the honour and happiness of some share in her acquaintance, and who is not without pride enough to hope that he may die possessed of her friendship: the profession of which hope he considers equivalent to a voluntary obligation of himself, to endeavour a constant perseverance in the paths of sincerity and virtue; and as one of the best methods of entitling himself to a double portion of contempt, if ever he shall become a flatterer or a slave. Some effusions of the heart, in which I indulged myself, when writing to the gentleman whom I mentioned, will now be suppressed: since I consider not only of whom, but to whom I am writing. And for the same reason, I shall generally speak of the author in the third person, and on what I have to say upon the subject, shall endeavour from henceforth to speak in a manner as abstracted from any thing but my ideas of the work itself, as if I were commenting on Thucydides, Sallust, or Tacitus.

Of the introductory part of the first letter it would not become me to say much, lest by my inferior commendations I should depretiate the reward of the character which is there commemorated: let me only hope that the love of our country, which the discernment of such a mind as that from whence I borrow the observation has marked, in agreement and subordination to the welfare of the human race, as his ruling passion, will be some apology for the observations which I have to make; proceeding, with all their imperfections, from a similar principle.

In writing of history, especially particular history, and not only of a certain country, but of a certain period of time, detached from the general annals of that country, a good historian has generally in view, not only the great uses common to all history rightly executed, of instruction and anticipation of national experience, by striking examples and a mutually illustrating series of important facts, enforced by proper explanations of their causes and consequences, but also some leading principle of political truth, running through that particular period. And thus there is a kind of unity of action and of moral, very highly suited to interest the attention, to fix upon the memory; and for the most part more especially adapted to the persons and times to which it is addressed. The history of the Stewarts might alone be a sufficient example, and an illustrious justification of this conduct: in which history the leading principle appears to be no less than *the superior excellence and benefit of a free government, compared with the government of despotic force, ruinous both to those who suffer, and to those who exercise it.*

The author of the letter now in consideration seems to have in view a leading principle of equal importance, and necessary at all times to be understood, and not least in this, of the *pernicious and ignominious consequences of a government founded in corruption, or in other words, on the influence of undue interests upon particular persons, factions, or branches of the community, under whatever denomination; by which means those securities of freedom may be insensibly and effectually undermined, and even with the plausible appearances of defending*
liberty

liberty itself, which had turned the attacks of open violence upon the heads of the assailants.

And to this we may add, as a secondary and consequent principle, the necessity in every exigence which calls for a reformation in government, to take care that it be not superficial and confined to obnoxious persons, or particular acts of mal-administration; but that it clear the source and fortify the constitution against the same or more dangerous, though less alarming, attempts. So that it is remarkable the two histories of this author contain examples, precautions, and remedies of the only two evils by which public happiness can be destroyed, force and fraud, of which, the former defeated, makes a principal part of the history of the Stewarts; and the baneful success of the other runs through this latter history.

The first, which I consider as the great leading principle, is very naturally connected with the character of the person to whom the letters are written; and is doubtless most deeply interesting to the present times: I will therefore take it, with the preliminary clause, in the words of the author, which are these: “As the
 “love of your country, and the welfare of the human race,
 “is the only ruling passion I have ever discovered in your character,
 “I shall avail myself of this inclination, and endeavour to fix
 “your attention.” After which follow the words, inclusive of the principal proposition, “*by the interesting detail of those causes*
 “*which have insensibly led us from the airy height of imaginary*
 “*security,*

*“ security, prosperity, and elevation, to our present state of danger
 “ and depravity.”*

With regard to the fatal state policy which is remarked by the historian to have projected and conducted the Reformation in England, and to have sacrificed the purity of religion, and freedom of conscience, to corrupt and arbitrary views; I must with regret confess the justice of the remark: which, if it seem an invidious truth, it must be remembered is no other than a truth expressed with new beauty and the usual strength of Mrs. Macaulay's style, but confessed formerly by writers who perhaps were some of them even partially attached to the hierarchy. That the subsequent politics in this matter have little degenerated from so unhappy a beginning, needs not my confession: it is too present and too afflicting an experience. The observation, however, detracts nothing from the honesty of particular reformers, nor from the glory of our religion, but rather does honour to both; by leaving them to stand on their own independent foundation.

But the great Revolution, from the high principles on which it was founded in a general consideration, the felicity with which it was accomplished, and the ignominious servitude which it appeared to have driven from our necks, has long been the darling object of the friends of liberty. It is therefore with pleasure that I observe the true benefits of that event, in relation to the principles which it established and exemplified, clearly and accurately enumerated, and strongly expressed—the destruction of the nonsensical claim of hereditary,

hereditary, indefeasible right; the power of the crown referred to its true source of original compact; allegiance and protection declared reciprocally dependent on each other. Now in the application and practical security for the effect of those principles, whatever was erroneous or defective in the measures taken, whatever indirect or corrupt in the conduct of the men, is doubtless the proper subject of history to investigate and expose in its true colours: to endeavour this is meritorious; to perform it, is wise, virtuous, happy; and a signal service to Freedom, with her inseparable companion and support, Truth.

The power of calling, dissolving, or adjourning parliaments, ought, I am persuaded, either to have been wholly taken from the crown, or, at least, most cautiously and firmly restricted. The constitution ought of itself to call them—independent of the pleasure of an individual, at a certain time and place, and in a certain and equal manner; the constitution ought to dissolve them at the period of their trust: *annually*, I should think; or if not so, triennially with *rotation*, in the manner proposed, and for the reasons mentioned in the excellent observations on Mr. Hobbes; and to dissolve them before that period which the people shall have limited, unless at the instance of the major part of the people, is in my apprehension little, if at all, less than a power in the executive magistrate to dissolve the constitution. The adjourning should at least be restricted: otherwise it might be so managed as to answer all the purposes of a dissolution; and perhaps with the additional evil of hurrying or harrassing the representative body into hasty resolutions or corrupt compliances. The dangers and universal
contagion

contagion from the crown influence over elections and corporations were felt immediately, when the Revolution was yet fresh; and have been growing, perhaps daily, more mischievous and more alarming ever since. In such a state of affairs the power over the militia was much too incautiously continued so absolutely in the crown: and the nature of informations by the attorney-general is so justly censured for consonance with the star-chamber, that I doubt whether it be not a worse, because a less glaring instrument of oppression.

Full of wisdom and incontrovertible truth is the position which follows, with the reasons in support of it—"that whenever the succession in government is changed without substantial security for public liberty, its total destruction is accomplished by the means intended for its preservation." The reign of Edward the Fourth, the regal peculations of Henry the Seventh, and several other instances in our own and foreign history, of which it would be presumption in me to remind you, abundantly testify to this essential maxim; which neither the people, nor any honest leaders ought ever to lose a moment out of their sight.

It was doubtless a strange circumstance in a liberator of society to be displeased so early, as William was, in not having a confidence reposed with respect to permanent establishment of revenue in compliment of the man, at the expence of the real honour of the king, consisting in the independence of the nation; and he would have had my full leave to execute his menace of abdication.

Royalty

Royalty being not in my opinion a circumstance so essential to public happiness, as that the person on whom it is conferred should bid his own price for the acceptance or retaining of it.

As to the regulation of the militia, in the form and manner by the bill proposed, I have, in my frequent avocations of professional study, an excuse perhaps for saying that means and leisure, perhaps it is impertinent to add ability, are wanting in me, for a precise investigation of the adequateness of the scheme, or the defects it might contain. But that some considerable regulation in this point, in favour of the public security and national independance, was, has been, and is necessary, I can most readily and heartily concur.

The mortifying difficulties, and hardly obtained success, of the bill for restoring corporations, and declaring the validity of the laws in the great convention parliament, and consequently the competency of that uncommon, and in the forms of it irregular assembly, and by necessary conclusion, the sovereign rights of the people; the strong support, and even encouragement, and more than barely the royal protection given to the delinquent and servile faction, the enemies of the Revolution and of public liberty, seemed very naturally calculated to give a suspicion, that the king was better pleased with free principles, as steps to his power, than as regulations of it when obtained.

Whether the attainder of the family of Jefferies, after the just fall and unpitied death of that base, detestable character, was yet absolutely necessary to complete the work of public justice, I will not affirm: if it would have produced retribution to the injured, I should have been pleased with any act of that kind; provided it had left his family a substance to preserve them from starving: but attainders rarely if ever end in retribution to the injured parties; and they are apt to whet the appetite and encrease the strength of monarchical power: but that at the same time, the exalted qualities of Ludlow, so truly represented and so peculiarly fit for public service, should be excluded from his country, was indeed a circumstance that might well justify apprehension of a different principle to benignity, having operated in the rejection of the bill of attainder abovementioned.

The state of public parties, under indemnities and expectancies of favour on the delinquent side, and neglect, not without appearances of something more, towards those to whom the people had obligations, and the sovereign unfortunately greater: the too incircumspect conduct even of the Dissenters, whom the letter in consideration charges, I doubt on too much foundation, with inadvertence to the civil liberties of the public in other respects, even while they were promoting as they thought their own religious liberties, necessarily connected with general freedom, are afflicting circumstances. I would wish there might be a possibility, consistent with that truth from which I as little wish as expect to find a deviation in this work on which I am observing, I wish, if it can consistently with the sacred rights of truth, that it may appear,

appear, this censure would admit of some mitigation: not by justifying such a conduct, which cannot be justified; but by any thing that might shew this disposition of enlarging the power of the crown in prospect of religious toleration, was not so generally the temper of dissenting parties, as the expressions seem to imply. I have no information that enables me to offer evidence that it was not; and I fear my sentiments of what might have been and what was to have been expected, and the love of consistency in character, which is rarely very near perfection either in parties or individuals, had perhaps entered too much into notions which I have entertained on this subject: and in which my esteem to several most respectable individuals of the dissenting bodies, whose characters I revere for attachment to true liberty in all its branches, and of others whose friendship I value highly, may have thrown my judgment, such as it is, into an insensible bias.

At least the conduct of the hierarchy, as might be expected, from a combination of religious prejudices, personal vices, and the political more extensive vices of the system itself, was much more unjustifiable: wildly sacrificing liberty of every true kind, whether practical or in very principle; and traducing the scriptures of truth, virtue, and freedom, with the obtruded doctrines of passive obedience and non-resistance, without limitation or distinction.

The war with France, its causes, and the circumstances of parties at the time, appear before the reader in a manner agreeable to epistolary brevity; and at the same time, I think not prejudicial to necessary

information in an historical view. The great scene in Ireland is strongly represented; and the miserable impolicy of James in throwing away time and strength on the siege of Londonderry—a misconduct which has been the rock of more enterprising, and more judicious invaders—seems very deservedly reprehended. And his absurd affectation and anticipated abuse of a sovereignty not yet within his grasp, and which he was perpetually pushing from him by his bigotted indiscretion, his foolish extortions, and paltry expedients, are set before us in a manner very fit to give the reader a sufficient idea of his character. Indeed considering how much the zeal of his friends, the assistance of his formidable ally, and the errors and disappointments of his adversaries, did for him, under all these disadvantages which he created for himself, the inference which is drawn from all, is I think well warranted—that had he preserved any reasonable terms with the Protestants, or conducted himself in his short career with equity and moderation, he would have stood “no mean chance,” indeed, “of remounting the British throne.”

The frivolous grounds of rejection of the Place Bill, a bill grounded on principles of the wisest, most necessary, and most obvious caution; the imprudent and dishonourable dismissal of the Limerick garrison, with means and opportunity supplied them of acting as banditti in foreign armies against us, as they had at home; the retention of an undeserving minister in his office, and the triumphant impunity of others, have a complexion more suitable to the government of the exiled king, than of the chosen guardian of liberty, set with such
unreserved

unreserved confidence in his place; and such very imperfect advances, if any, in public security, seem to have been not very cheaply bought at the encrease of two millions and near a quarter in the space of three years to the national burden: a sum, now indeed, too scanty perhaps, for a month's supply of our glorious Administration; but then considered as enormous, when discretion and public integrity were only weakened, and not extinguished.

I do not wonder, that from these scenes, the benevolent Genius should be disposed to remove awhile to the regions of ideal kings, and happy monarchies of imagination. May that Genius live to see a more than imaginary happiness of communities, under some constitution best adapted to complete and preserve political felicity. And may the page, most justly hated by despotism and corruption, enlighten times to come, and empires yet unborn.

The *second Letter*, like the first, and like the other productions of the same happy genius and cultivated understanding, appears, in the most cursory view, to be written with that simple elegance of stile, which is becoming on every subject, and in every kind of writing; which is essentially requisite, to support the inostentatious dignity of historical narration; and which I feel it much easier to admire, than to approach in epistolary correspondence, where its merit is acknowledged, even by those who neglect it every where else.

But from these general observations, which I hope it will be allowed

me to have made once for all, without presuming at the indelicacy as it may appear, or impertinence of repeating them hereafter unnecessarily, permit me to attempt the more difficult consideration of those circumstances, which are peculiar to the letter now before me.

The first paragraph, containing Dr. Wilson's remark on the precedent letter, furnishes an answer to the apology which I have heard in favour of the Revolutionists, on their neglect of the necessary limitations of encroaching monarchy; which apology has been that they were hindered by the powerful faction of those, who, besides the general principles of arbitrary doctrine, were either personally attached to James, or religiously devoted to him and his family, under the unaccountable notions of divine right. But these persons, as you observe, and as the tenor of the former letter infers, would have been willing enough to have limited those powers, or not to have opposed their limitation with respect to William, whom on every principle they detested; and would have trusted to divine right and the privileges they imagined to be inherent in the lawful hereditary monarch, that such restrictions should have done no prejudice to this imaginary dignity, if events should replace him on the throne.

With this disposition of the Jacobites, natural and necessary to them as such, one should have thought the Whigs, if sincerely disposed, might easily have carried the points which the public liberty demanded, notwithstanding any opposition from the Tories, whose idol being absolute power in general, and not in any particular family, their in-
terests

terests were as necessarily opposed to the Jacobites, as they naturally should have been to the Whigs; and who therefore might have been obliged to stand, at great disadvantage, alone.

The king, as a true friend of liberty, should have been even more inimical to the general principles of the Tories, than to the particular prejudices of the Jacobites; he should, consistently with his own declaration, as remarked by the sagacious Davenant, have concurred to remedy the mischiefs of the former reign; and not, contrary to his avowed sense, and particular, at least tacit, engagement, and in breach of one of the first general duties of a king of England, to have continued and augmented one of the greatest mischiefs of that reign, the long dependance and consequent corruption of parliament. But the historical evidence of the letter, on which I am observing, and the confession of his greatest admirers and most devoted friends, concur to prove that his conduct and intentions were quite the reverse of this; and only attempt to offer palliatives, as weak as they are improper to be bestowed on such a method of governing. One cannot but join with a deep concern, and mixture of indignation, in the reflexion which follows these particulars, on the conduct of the Whig party, that “swayed rather by private interest, revenge, ambition, and other appetites, than guided by any sense of the public good, they no sooner had upon the throne a prince, feared and revered abroad and idolized here, but some persons”—those very persons indeed who owed a behaviour directly opposite, in regard to their own character and

the public—" immediately forgot the cause for which they had called him over. "

These judicious remarks of so eminent a cotemporary of William, throw a light upon the subject, against which it would be difficult, if any thing could be so, for men the most partial to shut their eyes, or for the most subtle ingenuity to evade; they therefore appear to be very properly inserted in this interesting letter. If what is advanced by the modern writer, mentioned just after, relative to William's artifice, to evade the designs in favour of public liberty before his settlement on the throne, be true, as it seems not inconsistent with that king's subsequent measures, I think nobody can say much of his public spirit, nor greatly admire the resolution and sagacity of the partisans of freedom in that day.

With regard to the Tories reign, the charge that the corruptions of that party primarily flow from the badness of their hearts, and thence infect their understanding, is certainly heavy; but I do not know that it is ill-founded, considering them as not only in base submission to the most abject degradation of our nature, but as the magnifiers of that which produces it; the active promoters of the worst thing, arbitrary power; and too commonly by the worst means, treachery and corruption. As far as the Whigs acted upon similar principles, not only a Tory writer might, but this excellent writer does, with equal truth and candour, pass the same censure upon Whigs, and upon Whiggism too, if it makes any part of that political system, to
justify

justify evil and corruptive conduct on the principles of necessity, or on the shocking pretext of defending the sacred cause of Freedom, not to be defended by such aids, or champions of such a kind. That a man's bad heart may, and naturally will, corrupt his understanding, is, I think, no absurd assertion, but verified by the best observations of human nature, on the soundest principles of philosophy, and on the general tenor of our religion. As to those who would be esteemed moderate Tories, and who, if they are sincere, are in reality no Tories at all, they do not appear to be included within this censure, though it does not seem to me possible to defend them from another, much lighter indeed, of inconsistency in opinion, and infirmity of judgement, either natural, or from prejudices of education.

The neglect of Ireland is another circumstance of king-craft in the protraction of the war, which the love of continued campaigns, and the sense of the favourable tendency of military enterprises to the enlargement of monarchical authority, together with the use he had made of this tendency in his own country, and the sensible remarks of Davenant, concur to render at least not unreasonably suspected in this dexterous politician and royal hero.

The loss by the Irish war seems not at all immoderately taken, including devastation of every kind, and the destruction of multitudes of brave men on both sides, the whole ultimately falling to our account, at the sum, which would startle any thing but our new political arithmetic, of seven millions; according to the observation

D.

from

from Davenant. But, be this, as ~~you~~^{the} discerning correspondent observes, error or mal-intention in William, the Parliament appears to have understood its own manœuvres in a degree that would hardly discredit it, even if it subsisted now. And the crown appears to have pretty well understood the Parliament, when it could raise so recently, from the accustomed frugality of English government, upwards of six millions in one year.

How much of these expences was really necessary and well applied, and what proportion was disingenuously abused, to the creating of a pernicious influence, it being even beyond the power of history to determine, it is perhaps no misfortune to a reader not to be able to guess. But that after “thirty millions” expended under confidence of purchasing deliverance, not only from Popery, but from the encroachments of selfish power, the people should have found an immense and rapid corruption of the representative body, and a new and surer path paved to arbitrary power by their deliverer himself, must have been mortifying in the extreme, while there was any sense of national honour.

In such a situation, it had indeed been no wonder, if the temper of the disappointed people co-operating with the cabals of those men who had been the chief instruments in the exaltation of William, had brought in his rival, had not many singular occurrences, as the Historian observes, prevented.

Almost

Almost ten years was a long period for venal treachery of the chosen guardians of the people—a long one I mean then;—and for continued remissness of a people, whom late experience might have convinced of the necessity of perpetual vigilance for the preservation of freedom: and either as the historian with her accustomed propriety and impartiality, observes, William must have been ignorant of the nice balance required in the different powers of a mixed government, through the unfortunate friction of which, so much theoretical liberty is continually wearing off and lost in practice, or he must have been truly idolatrous of power, to have such open expectations of its two worst engines, an independent revenue, and a standing army, which seem to differ from corruption and oppression much in the way in which a necessary cause differs from its effect. And indeed, I should fear by the openness of his demands, contrary to the usual *froidueur* and reserve of his temper, that the longer he had lived amongst us, the less he saw in our temper, of opposition to servitude.

In the prosecution of these observations, I doubt my anxiety for an excellent mother, an anxiety which you will readily excuse, has made my imperfect, very imperfect endeavours, yet more so than they otherwise might be. However, such as they are, they have served as a serious amusement to my own thoughts; and I know all just allowances, and more than rigorously just, will be made by the candour of yours; and with this advantage, I have reason to hope the favourable judgement of the Public.

The spirit which the king's explicit declarations of an unbounded power and confidence required, had excited in the Commons, degenerate as they were, is expressed with energy, and its effects on each side, perspicuously shewn. The limitation to seven thousand men, for the total establishment of guards and garrisons in England, seems a remarkable circumstance, considering the season and the Parliament. And it appears strongly, how unequal a match artifice and chicanery is, for a moderate degree of firmness and discretion, when we consider the success of the parliamentary inflexibility, notwithstanding the renewed alarm of abdication. The happy effect of this steadfastness is yet more apparent in the signal circumstances which attended the dismissal of the Dutch guards.

The affair of the forfeited estates, and the success of the Commons in the scheme of resumption, notwithstanding the royal disinclination, argues yet farther what a resolute House of Commons, even though degenerated from their proper purity and full splendor of independence in no inconsiderable degree, may yet do for the people: but the instantaneous dissolution of that Parliament, with many such specimens in history, shews what a king may do with freedom, and the work of public reformation, or redress of particular grievances, when he has it in his power to dissolve a Parliament at pleasure.

The dismissal of Lord Sommers seems to have been indeed, as it is called in the letter which I have under my eye, a great sacrifice: and the failure of even such a sacrifice to answer the end proposed, was

a disappointment doubtless to William of a very complicated kind. It is happy that the laying of the foundations of excessive power is so very obnoxious to such disappointments and difficulties.

One cannot help sympathising with the truly patriotic author in an indignant sense of the low expedient of party preferments against reason, and public interest, and the yet much baser arts of enormous corruption for the purpose of engaging the nation in a war more advantageous to the former country of the king, than calculated for the benefit of this. And in truth it is not wonderful, though unhappy it be, that measures not purely designed for the good of the community, should be promoted by other methods than the sense of the community, and their fair consent. The foundations of a war which produced such momentous changes in the state of Europe, and in the constitution of Great Britain, are I think clearly and impartially represented.

But what can be hoped when corruption, which the Historian observes began at the latter end of the reign of Charles the Second, becomes so general as she remarks it to have been, in both parties, Whig and Tory, at the period now in question?

I cannot help remarking the equal justice done to the conduct of both parties. As here the Tories and Jacobites are noticed to have joined their efforts in opposing the commencement of continental war, without either attributing the merit of the opposition to the Whig party,

party, or making the war itself meritorious, because it was a measure of theirs. It is true, the opposite party are not complimented with the best public motives for a measure in itself right; nor could they consistently on the fairest consideration.

In the same spirit are the observations which follow, which for the expression, the sentiment, and the philosophical conclusion, I cannot forbear to extract in the words of the Author.

“ Whatever were the views, the principles, or the prejudices
 “ which actuated the conduct of the majority in the lower House, it
 “ is certain that they enlarged the constitutional security for the liber-
 “ ties of the subject by their limitations in the Act of Settlement: it
 “ is certain they defeated the views of the Popish line, by fixing the
 “ crown in the Protestant succession: and it is as certain that they were
 “ the only Parliament, since the Revolution, who had preserved the
 “ rules of œconomy, or even of decency, in the grants made out of
 “ the purses of their constituents.

“ That the Omnipotent Disposer and Director of all human actions
 “ and events, produces good out of evil, and often renders the pre-
 “ judices and vicious affections of his creatures instrumental to public
 “ and private happiness, is a maxim, my excellent friend, no less
 “ common than it is true. In this sense, all the enlightened lovers
 “ of their country must have considered the conduct of the Par-
 “ liament: in this sense they, undoubtedly, gratefully accepted the
 “ offered

“ offered blessing; and left it to the same Omnipotent Ruler to judge
 “ of the merit of their benefactors.”

But to see the declared friends of liberty turn the populace against those men in their best measures, to whom they had been pliant in the worst and most arbitrary of the Reign now in consideration, is a very unpleasant object of contemplation; and the means used to suppress the tumults thus excited, are very justly censured, as well as those which had been used to excite them.

Hardly more pleasant is the unseasonable, and at any time unjustifiable conduct of the Lords in the matter of impeachments; in which the universal maxim of natural justice and constitutional law, forbidding a man to be judge where he is party, appears to have a peculiar force.

The observation with regard to the party prejudices of this Parliament notwithstanding, in selecting two of the Whig leaders, while of their own faction there were others equally culpable, is so just that it would not have easily been drawn into censure, if it had been carried no further: but the same justness of judgment pursues the point, and pronounces with true spirit that though the selection in a personal view was partial, the principle of the impeachment in a general consideration was perfectly constitutional: as calling those individuals to account (from which certainly no merit should exempt any) who acted as instruments in transactions found to be destructive of the public weal.

The artful indifference of William, enjoying the contests of his Parliament, and thus drawing both parties into the dependence which he desired, is a trait very distinguishing and important; and I do not remember to have seen it any where else: though it is fairly drawn from the materials of facts common to every historian; and only I think, a mark out of many, of superior discernment.

The opportune incident to the Court party from the imprudent promises of Lewis to the banished James, in the last scene of mortality, appears to be justly taken, rather as a pretext, than as the true cause of the war: though this nation seems to have had more concern in the pretext than in the cause.

I am not enough at ease to do justice to the account of the dissolution of the Tory Parliament, as of the Whig before: the judicious reflections on the calling of the new Parliament, and on the state of the nation at that time: the just remarks on the speech of William, and the deductions drawn from that very remarkable harangue by comparison with the character of the speaker, the circumstances of the times, the Parliament, and the nation: the singular turn in favour of the Whig party, rather to the strengthening of Court influence than to any public advantage: the eager operations of both Houses towards precipitating the favourite object of the king: the relation of the famous contest of the Commons, for the privilege of their House against popular attacks in the midst of their obsequiousness to the Court; and the death of the distinguished individual who had been the

spring of so many great events, just at the instant when he appeared established in the plenitude of long coveted power, and in the height of unbounded expectations, to the success of which all things seemed to administer.

The summing up of all is admirable. The contrast between the theoretical improvement of the understandings of people, concerning the constitution, and the practical depravation, is strikingly just. The observation is I think uncontrovertible, that there is no one article in the Declaration of Rights, which had not been recognized by former princes; of which Magna Charta, the 28 Ed. III. the 16 Car. I. ch. 10 the Petition of Rights, and other statutes are evidence: and though the reverence of ignorant superstition was more suddenly dissipated than it might otherwise perhaps have been, the influence arising from the disposal of an immense revenue had indeed given more solid increase to the power of the crown, than hereditary princes had derived from the notion of an unalienable indefeasible right: and of this opinion, in a great measure, seems a writer, who upon this occasion is not to be suspected by the most jealous: I mean the author of the Commentaries on the Laws of England, who seems to be forced by the evidence of the thing to acknowledge, b. IV. ch. 33. par. vi. pretty near the same effects of the acquisition of the crown in influence, of what it has apparently lost in prerogative.

The strong and melancholy picture of the undeniable consequences of the Revolution, fills one with a painful admiration. The character

of William, as rather a fortunate and splendid than an intrinsically great character, is I fear too just; and I doubt impartial posterity will conclude, on the question of the historian, in the close of her letter, “whether he was the saviour and deliverer of this country, or the subverter of the remaining sound principles he found in the constitution?” with too much reason and evidence to preponderate in the negative of the former, and affirmative of the latter part.

With respect to the *third Letter*, the beginning of it is employed on a very important subject, the National Debt, the effects of which have been so important, and the manner of creating, palliating, and supporting it, so very singular, that a full, concise, and clear account of its origin, principles, and effects, must ever be interesting and instructive: perhaps never more than at the present crisis.

The party and private causes which first gave rise to this evil, unknown and we may presume unimagined a century and an half ago; the immediate, particular, and public mischiefs, that flowed from this fatal source; the enervation of œconomy, public and private; the prostitution of honour, and corruption of national manners; the creation of a new species of despotism, contriving under the forms of a free government, to answer the purposes and produce the evils of the worst, by methods more pernicious, more effectual, and more secure, than all the subtilty of Augustus could invent, are displayed in a manner which gives novelty to a subject, the constant theme of historians and politicians, since its appearance in this country: an important admonition

tion to future times and countries; and an easy and just preparation for the discovery of changes in our constitution and national circumstances, otherwise unaccountable.

It is rather curious to observe with the instructive author, how little circumstances relative to the sovereign shall turn the conduct of a party against its principles; and what is yet more, induce it to co-operate with its rivals; and how easily the cause of public liberty, when it is in the hands of a faction, and not in the people's own, can be bowed and warpt to personal fears, avarice, ambition, or vanity, as was remarkably the case of the Whig party, on the accession of Anne.

The act of personal generosity in the Queen, in deducting an hundred thousand pounds from her yearly revenue, has its just praise given to it: but it is shocking to observe it so truly contrasted with the neglect of political œconomy, at the same time, by the same person, continued through her reign. Yet worse is it to see a Parliament and a nation pushing on an extravagant and boundless war, as principals, (and not according to the proposal which is ascribed to the Earl of Rochester, as auxiliaries,) under pretext of maintaining the liberty of Europe; and at home plunging their own into the abyss of corruption, and contented with the echoes of divine and indefeasible right from the pulpit, which can powerfully defend a far different cause than that of absurdity and oppression, and from the walls of the representative council.

The rapid and illuminated detail of the military operations of the favourite general, gives in my apprehension a striking general idea; which is all that can be required, or perhaps should be attempted by an historian upon such a subject: of which this is particularly true, which has been observed of our imagination in general, that a certain degree of remoteness is necessary to a general comprehension of the object to be viewed. The characteristic strokes and great outlines are quite sufficient; and they are exhibited with great force, and in a very just and lively manner: the rest I readily allow would have been obscure and languid; or if they could have been distinctly expressed, without prejudice to the comprehensive idea of the whole war, they could only have kept objects behind of much superior importance with respect to instruction and solid entertainment.

However, the drawing of homogeneous facts into one focus, and thus preserving to each train of events its proper colour, and just discrimination, by an elegant arrangement, and from a multitude of mutually interfering incidents, and a vast extent and variety of matter, deducing a simple, uniform, and connected view, is what I would endeavour to represent as it deserves, if any who has perused the great history of the House of Stewarts could be surprised in finding the same order and beauty of distribution upon a different scale in that part of the present work, of which I am now speaking. I am content, therefore, to observe, that if next to investigation, disposition of matter be the first and most essential merit of an historian, it will be impossible to do justice to this history just published, so effectually

as by wishing that it may be examined in these two great points with the most critical exactness; that it may be not superficially considered, nor partially tried; but have impartiality, knowledge, and judgement, for its inquisitors.

Unhappily the state of our naval affairs in Queen Anne's reign did not call for these talents of selection, disposition and arrangement: and yet I think, I have seen even the scandalous trifling in our affairs at that time, in our proper element, pretty verbosely enumerated by some writers who have appeared to fancy themselves obliged, if a year was taken up in doing of nothing, to be as liberal of words, paper, and time, in writing about that nothing, as in elucidating any the most involved, instructive, and interesting point. Nay I think it has frequently happened that a trifling prolixity has been compensated by a brevity so ingenious as to omit the most material parts of the subject.

But though facts were very deficient on the head of marine affairs, and the historian neither could supply that defect, by stepping out of the province of history, nor chose to fatigue the reader by a dull recital of unimportant events, yet this defect itself of materials has given an opportunity of setting the impolicy of those times in a very instructive point of view, by contrasting the *eclat* of our triumphs by land, which vanished like a meteor and left us worse than disappointed, with the obscurity that hung so heavily on our naval honour, and the voluntary loss of solid and secure advantages. One while to gratify the genius, or to subserve the policy of a great general whom we had
chosen

chosen for our king; and another to furnish a very honourable post to a very good sort of a man who had the honour to be husband to our Queen; without being so ill-natured, or so uncourtly as to trouble ourselves whether indolence, ductility, and want of judgement, in the affair committed to him, were proper qualifications for the office of Lord High Admiral of England; or whether it was prudent to do credit to the appointment by a farther acquiescence in an unconstitutional council of assistance. Of the unsuitableness of the Prince of Denmark to this great charge, and of the ill state of our marine at that period, there is more agreement, I think, than is common in the opinions of writers on our history. I should therefore have taken less notice of it here; only that one may observe, where there is an agreement in facts and general observations, a manner and justness in the applying of them, a discernment of causes and consequences that makes a reflection very important, or an incident, or circumstance of character instructive in the hands of an historian worthy of that distinguished name, which in an ordinary writer would be of little moment. The cause, for instance, of this inconvenience others might have been content to trace from the personal disposition of the Queen, or the facility of the people, happy in their victories by land: but the principle of overgrowing monarchical influence operating in this, as in various more general instances, and producing effects so opposite to the true spirit of the constitution, and interests of the people, was worthy to be marked, rather than more secondary or incidental causes, or consequences of less extent and importance.

And

And with regard to the constitution, which this and the former history ~~too~~ extensively considers in the important case of the borough of Aylesbury, I feel a kind of personal satisfaction, to find the opinion I entertained of the Chief Justice Holt, on that memorable occasion, so agreeing with the sentiments of so enlarged an understanding, and so comprehensive a judgement: though I know there have been very considerable names in the profession, on the other side; and that a recent case was adjudged upon principles directly opposite to those upon which the great judge, of whom I have been speaking, founded his opinion. But I never could comprehend the principles, however learnedly and ingeniously maintained, of those later decisions: nor see a reason why the court of King's Bench, or any other court, should not be able to perceive, that whatever privileges there might be in any court, there could be none to hinder a man from seeking remedy for a grievance, which he supposed himself to have suffered, by due process of law; or why that, or any other court, should not be able to discharge a man, committed by whomsoever, who on the face of the commitment was detained for no illegal or unwarrantable act, but for prosecuting a suit before a competent jurisdiction, and for a cause of action legal and constitutional.

The resolutions of the Lords, upon this great occasion, are so worded, and convey such constitutional principles, that I am very glad to see them included in a work which is so fit to preserve them in public memory, and commend them to posterity.

At the same time, with regard to the motives of the contending parties on either side, we are led by facts no less than by the observations that follow, to think that Cæsar had a party, and who else you will had a party, but the Public had none.

With respect to the provision for the Clergy, if the party of the Public had been stronger than private parties or factions, the scheme of Sir John Holland and Sir Joseph Jekyl to discharge them from the tenths and first fruits, those reliques of Papal dependence, and to have raised a new fund to answer the beneficent intentions of the Queen, appears to have been a better and more constitutional expedient than that of transferring this singular branch of the revenue towards the increase of small benefices.

But we find where the monarchical principle has been successful in its efforts to increase its ascendancy at the expence of those other powers which in theory are always supposed to retain the constitutional equilibrium, that Whig and Tory, or any other parties under any other names, are not much better than puppets which the people are content to be at the cost and trouble of keeping for the amusement of the sovereign, and which are shifted and played accordingly, while the people, like true Britons, sometimes clap, sometimes hiss, and much oftener and longer doze over the spectacle. Accordingly the Whigs appear and out comes an act for farther security of the Protestant succession, with the trifling omission under a Whig ministry of the limitations justly thought necessary for the liberty of the people.

The great and extraordinary alteration in the political state of England, and the neighbouring kingdom, by reducing both into one, by the famous Union, is represented, with the preparatory steps, and most remarkable concomitant circumstances, in a very full point of light, as it required to be. The temper, state, and conduct of the Scotch nation, from the time of the Revolution in England, to that signal change, was apparently necessary to be described, in order to give a just idea of the various springs and movements of such an event: and upon the knowledge of these, not only a just notion of the causes by which it was brought forwards, retarded, and at last effected, but the principles of a right determination as to the natural fitness, political expedience, or justice of the measure, must greatly depend.

With respect to England, the historian—though declining an express judgement—has furnished the reader with a clue which may lead him, I think, without much difficulty to decide whether the Union ought to be considered beneficial to this part of the united kingdoms: which admitted no less than forty-five Scotch members, an eleventh part of the whole House of Commons, to a share in the joint legislature of both kingdoms, in that branch of the legislature whose independence and freedom from all extraneous influence, is of such inestimable importance; which admitted sixteen Scotch peers to a share in the legislature together with the peers of England in the other House; which “had been repeatedly rejected on very sound principles on both

“sides;” which was at once to bind, to constrain, to force, into the closest union, two nations who had ever regarded each other with the

eyes of jealousy, and whom the temperature of air, (and though not strictly speaking any great difference of climate, natural causes of a similar, or more extensive kind) and more than these, the utmost opposition of national manners, and animosities of the most inveterate sort exercised for ages had made more than hostile to one another; and who, though vehemence of opposition, and rancour of aversion, should have ceased at once, which took so much time to cool and soften, appeared naturally inapt for a perfect coalition.

With regard to Scotland in particular, when we consider the temper on which they proceeded in resolving, without being obliged to quibble, or condescending to palliate, that James by his misgovernment had forfeited his right to the crown; when we consider their struggles for the independence of their Parliament, the independence of their judges, the independence of their ecclesiastical government; when we reflect on the vigour of their commercial enterprises as a separate nation, and with every check thrown in their way, and every gale of encouragement changed into the most adverse blasts; when we reflect on the sentiments and conduct of those who seem to have been among the wisest, the most patriotic, and most intelligent in the interests of their country, in the Scotch Parliament; when we reflect that with the advancement of individuals, with the acquisition of commercial interests, perhaps of doubtful utility in proportion to the nature of their resources, and the superior opulence and cultivation of their newly united neighbour—and possibly as to those points in which the advantage might be most real, not unattainable independently

pendently of the Union;—when we observe, that with their proportion in the taxes to their share in the representative body not so high as that of one to four, and their national laws and customs, and in a great measure their judicature, though with an ambiguous clause as to the latter, preserved entire, they yet lost their national independence for which they had spent rivers of blood, preferring hard freedom to the easiest and most splendid servitude, lost that which is the nerve of public spirit and civil improvement, and came into a legislature corrupted in its most essential principles, and not then in the fairest prospect of melioration; and that, whosoever might be the gain, they were sold and tricked, and after all coerced into the Union, though I will not presume to affirm that the Scotch may not have gained commercial and other advantages of real value by it, I cannot easily think that they were gainers on the whole.

I am far from thinking that those advantages were purchased cheaply: I am not without the apprehensions professed at the time by men whose political principles in other respects lay me under no partiality in their favour. And whether, on the whole, the Union will operate to the security, or to the destruction of the whole empire, I leave to be inferred from an impartial view of the accurate and just account given in the History; and upon the whole evidence taken together.

In the beginning of the *fourth* of these interesting Letters, the author has expressed her inducements to that particular brevity which she has used in the military part of the narration, in terms so happy,

and upon reasons of such solidity and importance, that I think the transcribing of her own words will be more satisfactory and agreeable than any thing I could say. And I trust every friend of liberty, public virtue, and human felicity, will subscribe with me to the justness and propriety of the general observation: and that hardly any impartial judge, competently informed upon the subject, will dissent from the particular application.—The words are these:

“ I know of no real advantage which can accrue to any people
 “ from success in arms, but that of political security, or the attain-
 “ ment of such a proportion of riches, as, rendered nationally bene-
 “ ficial, by the honest œconomy of a wise and just government, may
 “ in part or in whole exonerate the public from the burthen of
 “ taxes.

“ This was for a series of years the fruits of Roman conquests;
 “ but when instead of such beneficial consequences, victory only
 “ serves to facilitate the ends of domestic tyranny, and is purchased
 “ with the addition of accumulated taxes, with public debts and
 “ public slavery, for my own part I look upon the military achieve-
 “ ments of such a nation as so many badges of their servitude, or as
 “ glaring marks of their folly, and therefore I cannot dwell with
 “ pleasure on the unpleasing subject.”

As I have transcribed this passage on account of the concise and full illustration it gives of the motives of a conduct which few historians
 have

have had the discretion to pursue. I beg leave to transcribe the following for the sake of the clear and just retrospect which I think it gives of the state of the nation, for about thirty years from the Revolution; with the prospect of the public dispositions influencing that memorable period, which is the next object of this singularly instructive and pleasing letter, now engaging my consideration.——

It is this:

“ As from the period of the Revolution to the present æra, the
 “ motive for contention between Whig and Tory was merely the
 “ enjoyment of power and lucre of office, the nation reaped no
 “ benefit from opposition conducted on no one principle of public
 “ good: the purse of the nation was as liberally granted as it was
 “ lavishly squandered; and the people, who never examine remote
 “ consequences, were not in general displeased, even with the in-
 “ curring large debts, for the glorious purpose of mortifying the pride
 “ of Lewis, and humbling the pretensions of the French court.”

I beg pardon for this extract, because some very sage speculatists have lately discovered that historical facts and observations may be very ingenious and amusing, but that as for us, we live quite out of all need of benefit from historical analogy; that contrary to the opinion of Solomon, every thing is new under the sun; and that we are as much exempt from any necessity, and superior to any inducement, of learning wisdom from the errors of our ancestors, as our posterity is likely to think itself exempt from benefiting by the mighty and un-
 exempld

exemplified instances of our governmental wisdom, exemplified so constantly and signally at this day. Therefore as the parties of queen Anne's reign are dead, and as doubtless none have risen, and none e'er will rise, like them, I only am to be understood as quoting an observation on a curiosity in civil history, which, like some in natural, is so long without example or instance of similarity, that it may be supposed almost unintelligible or inconceivable to readers of this time, who know that every measure of government, and every measure of opposition, is invariably directed to that end, that one principle, which the old-fashioned parties of those less virtuous and happy days overlooked for lucre or power, the public good.

There is one observation of the people never examining remote consequences, or as Harrington expresses it, "feeling but not seeing," that perhaps some are ready enough to anticipate and interpret to the prejudice of popular government; as I think a learned and acute commentator on Shakespeare does, in a note on the play of Coriolanus.

But though the people are not made for remote speculation, the historian has shewn us in her great history for what they are made: for integrity, resolution, and public independence; for the choice of representatives and managers in trust of their affairs, possessed of those qualities which are not of the most abstruse nature; for the foundation of equitable, just, and wise government. Whereas all other forms, or principles of government that deviate from the popular, in proportion as they become arbitrary, are naturally selfish, and see the present interests
of

of the community as remote, and their own imagined interests, whether of the moment, or in expectation, as the only things present and real.

I hope this is not absolutely digression; and now return more immediately to my subject.

And here on a sudden amidst the blaze of victory, and the ineffectual calls of peace, we meet with one of those incidents, which the French writers of the Roman history, Cartrou and Rouille observe, with the prudence of experimental information, to be peculiar to governments of a monarchical cast: the councils and interests, conduct, character, and fate of a nation, however splendid in its successes, extensive in territory, opulent, and in general estimation great, dependent on such little, secret, and narrow causes, as govern the interests of private families, and sacrificed to the changeable affections of an individual. In this view, the representation of the personal foibles of Queen Anne, and the higher faults of her favourite Duchesse, becomes most materially interesting, and indeed, the contrast of character, and the opposition in both parties, between temper and situation, exhibits a very beautiful and striking picture, when drawn by so elegant, skillful, and animated a pencil. And Mrs. Masham completes the groupe with her Harley; while the change of style, or difference of drapery and colouring puts one very properly in mind that we are to consider the nation is included at that time, in the persons of the good-natured Queen, the imperious Duchesse, the insinuating

insinuating woman of the bed-chamber; and Mr. Harley, manager of the puppets, to recur to my former allusion, in the lower theatre.

The scheme of this celebrated gentleman, of forming a ministry promiscuously of Whig and Tory, without respect to party feud and party principle, I believe is justly commended, as "good in itself," but when we consider how very delicate a point it must be, to form, retain, and employ, beneficially to the public, a ministry so constituted; and how much room there is for design or mistake in the person who should form, to render it either a private coalition of factions, for his own benefit, or a system of ill assorted and discordant parts; we cannot wonder if this should be found true, (though indeed unhappily for this country) which is immediately subjoined, that such a maxim has never been either judiciously pursued or fairly intended.

It is curious too, on this occasion, to observe the common error of princes, so visible, so glaring, in Queen Anne, of thinking themselves then most absolute, when they are persuaded to become, in the strongest and most humiliating sense, dependent.

And now we are shewn in this history, a nation whom neither millions expended upon millions, nor the lives of thousands lavished for ends as apparently interminable as those of the then war, could awaken to attention, raised by janglings of family parties about the court, and excited by one disastrous battle; that of Almanza, perhaps happily

disastrous, if they had persevered to make a right use of it, raised to examine into the application of their monies, into the miserable and disgraceful state of their proper glory and bulwark, the marine; and the ministers by “a strange justification, pleading examples for the “abuse of trust and the neglect of the most important national concerns.” From thence we have a view given us of the Scotch commotion, which was more fortunately escaped than prudently provided against; the Duke of Marlborough’s successful campaign in Flanders; the revival of the Whig party; the blessings of victories, bonfires, votes of seven millions for the service of the campaign, and the glorious addition of ten thousand men to the establishment of the former year.

Conformably to this situation of things we might expect, if the matter were future and not past, the resort to chimerical and ruinous expedients for the support of ministerial prodigality. Hence the enlargement of the fund of the Bank of England, and prolongation of its term, and together with this the extension of the *pomæria* of paper currency, “instead,” in the words of the wise and patriotic historian, “instead “of paying off any part of the national debt, and getting rid of a “swarm of stock-jobbers and tax-gatherers, which preyed on the “vitals of the commonwealth.” And would this were the only instance of the truth of that maxim, which is on this occasion so aptly introduced, that “of all human errors, the errors of government are the “feldomest corrected.” As indeed, where power, pride, selfish interests, concur so largely to furnish the temptation, and the means of
G persisting

persisting in error, it must naturally be expected. If one should ask how England came not to be annihilated in such circumstances, the answer seems furnished by the historian; who shews the enemies of this country, as imprudent at that time, and as destitute of right principles of policy, as England herself: we overwhelmed with successes, disproportioned to our strength, not conducive to increase, and naturally tending to exhaust it; they sinking under defeats, which as not being merely the fate of war, but having temerity and mal-administration at their root, were in a state without remedy and without hope, farther than might be derived from our own improvement in misconduct.

We then in such a juncture see with some admiration, under the guidance of the historic muse, the conduct of the great military negotiators of peace rejecting the proposals of Lewis to give up the Spanish monarchy to the House of Austria, without equivalent; to cede the conquests on the empire upon the Upper Rhine; furnish a barrier for Holland; recognize the title of Queen Anne; disclaim the Pretender, and remove him from the French dominions; acknowledge the Protestant Succession to the crown of Great Britain; restore his possessions to the Duke of Savoy; and agree to the cessions made to the King of Portugal by the allies. One would have been glad to have seen some reason from our behaviour, and that of the Dutch States, on this occasion, to have congratulated our country on an instance of that "uncommon virtue, moderation in success."

But we were rather perhaps willing, at that time, to force our enemies into an opportunity of exerting the less singular virtue of resolution under adversity; and they paid us with the victory of Mons, purchased at so dear a price on our part, and in which the contest seems justly to be considered as one of the most obstinate ever known in the annals of modern war.

The judgement on the Imperial and British general, past by those who were not their passionate and devoted admirers, is impartially expressed; and I leave it without comment to the consideration of the reader, now pretty much unbiassed by the influence of either of the parties for or against the action.

The conduct of the amazed and dejected Lewis, and of the States of Holland, might well, I think, furnish the reflection which it does to the writer of the historical letter which I am now considering; and which is conveyed in the words of Shakespeare, who has the just honour of being called by her “our divine poet:” “Take
“phyfic, pomp!” Would that pomp took it as effectually as it does reluctantly!

In the midst of this interesting situation, with national concerns of such inestimable importance on her hands, with what astonishment does one see Great Britain absorbed in a most contemptible pursuit! The Queen, the Lords, the Commons, the Clergy, the people, press, pulpit, senate, towns, villages, and highways;

every quarter, every moment, and in a manner every individual, interested in the quarrel of Sacheverel, an obscure patron of a nonsensical doctrine, and as the historian remarks, too insignificant to be attacked, and too contemptible to be supported.

And yet here was a matter so ardently espoused, that in the nervous language of this truly animated Author, justified by cotemporary historians, “at no period of our history, in no exigence of the state, “was the attention of the public equally roused. Never prophet “honoured with the divine commission of declaring religious truths to “a believing people, never patriot on the point of being exalted to the “crown of martyrdom for the cause of equal law and liberty, had “been attended by the populace with such officious zeal.”

The remaining events, whether of the change produced in the interests of Europe by the testamentary disposition of the emperor Joseph, and the danger of the annexation of the Spanish to the Imperial crown in the person of his son Charles, the intrigues of domestic politics, and the various occurrences in which Great Britain was concerned, previous to the peace of Utrecht, are so concisely related, and with such *liaison* of circumstances, and perspicuity of arrangement, that it would I think be idle for me to attempt an abridgement of them; or to do any thing more than refer to the work itself.

The conduct of a man, who from timidity, or principles of that subtilty, which in low minds serves in the place of wisdom, is
attempting

attempting to be the bat of the fable, a bird with the birds, and a beast with the beasts, while he carries apparent marks incompatible with either, and by his resemblance of both has neither in confidence with him, was proper to be represented particularly, and in its true light, by the discerning writer of these Historical Letters, that one might see not only, "*unde tibi & patriæ quod imitere capias*," the subjects of imitation, not over abundant in the modern history of our country, but that which is to be avoided as base and corrupt in principle, despicable and ruinous in practice; "*the fœdum incæpto, fœdum exitu quod vites*." And this by a writer equally qualified by disposition, enabled by indefatigable spirit of enquiry, and assisted by the energy of genius, and powers of composition, to set the examples of both in the most illustrious point of view.

The character of Queen Anne in the close of this *Letter*, seems to my apprehension, very impartially and judiciously drawn: and is such, that, though on the whole it engages our sincere good opinion, and a kind of affectionate pity for the incapacity and infirmities of a person so well disposed, necessarily terminates in the same conclusion with that which is made by the historian: inducing to reflect with concern on the state of those nations who have made it essential to any tolerable degree of public felicity and honour, that a rectitude of heart, and comprehensive wisdom, rarely to be found in the freest and most incorrupt stations of life, should unite in an individual, born to the intoxicating height of sovereign eminence, and

educated in that mode, of which the fullest idea is conveyed when we say simply, the mode of a Court.

I now, in considering the *fifth Letter*, enter upon a new period, in which the Whigs seem to have had a full opportunity of displaying the true extent of their patriotism. And now under this ministry, who by their language might have been expected—to use the words of the admired writer, whose work is now before me—“seated in
 “the heart of the sovereign, governing his counsels, and intrusted with
 “the administration of his government to dispense law and justice
 “throughout the kingdom, to correct the errors of former administrations, and to place the constitutional forms on a basis sufficiently broad and solid to secure the permanent existence of that
 “freedom which they pretended to admire:” we find the historian presenting us with the fruits even of these men, the “suspension of
 “the *Habeas Corpus* Act, that great bulwark of English liberty,” and passing of the severe and arbitrary act, which is commonly known by the name of the Riot Act; and truly characterized as a “new
 “and unconstitutional restraint on the freedom of the subject.”

The Scotch rebellion of the year 1715, its rise, conduct, and progress, are placed with such elegant succinctness before the reader, as I think must be generally pleasing to those who have a perception of historical order, disposition, and symmetry. I cannot forbear taking a transcript of the important reflection with which the account of it is closed.

“ Thus

“ Thus abruptly finished an expedition uncorrectly executed, and
 “ injudiciously formed: but what better could be expected from weak
 “ councils, from treacherous friends, and from disjointed factions?
 “ acting solely from the motives of resentment and disappointed am-
 “ bition, totally void of those sound principles on which human na-
 “ ture can alone be elevated above the consequences which must ever
 “ attend unsuccessful heroism.”

I have taken the liberty of quoting this valuable passage, with
 the omission of a word, which I conjecture to have been an
 error of the press; as it prevents the period from closing; as agree-
 ably to the evident design of the author it should do in this
 place.

I could perhaps have received some addition of pleasure, if a
 little had been said on the character of Lord Derwentwater, who
 seems to have been almost the only person among the leaders of that
 commotion worthy of such a notice: but as he was cut off so early,
 and had little opportunity of influencing, or suspending the fate of a
 war so ill conducted in general, and so precipitately ended, perhaps
 the wish, if it had been indulged, would have appeared not so well
 founded; and in the brevity of epistolary narration, the great lines
 necessary to a right idea of history might perhaps have been injured,
 by attention to a character, which, all circumstances taken together,
 may perhaps be a more proper subject of biography.

However

However this may be, there follows a passage of some length, which I know not how to praise, but by transcribing, or referring to the work. I beg leave to do both: since it will certainly appear to the most advantage connected with the facts from which it results, and the example by which it is illustrated; and at the same time in making observations, I cannot overpass a passage of such momentous consequence, and in which the whole appears to merit a particular attention, both of the present times, and of all succeeding posterity. It follows in these words:

“ The calamities which this unsuccessful rebellion brought on
 “ private families, though a melancholy consideration, will appear
 “ trifling when compared to the irreparable injury the constitution
 “ suffered on this occasion. Unsuccessful rebellions always either
 “ increase or produce tyranny: the generality of mankind, governed
 “ by the pretended exigences of the present moment, never re-
 “ gard consequences, though big with mischiefs more dreadful
 “ than any of those which their injudicious caution endeavours to
 “ avoid.”

“ The flight of the Pretender, the sudden extinction of the re-
 “ bellion in Scotland, and the general submission of the people in
 “ England, rendered it totally useless to lay even a temporary re-
 “ straint on any, even of the lesser privileges of the subject; but the
 “ present opportunity of diminishing that small portion of the demo-
 “ cracy, which, on more than one occasion, had curbed the encroach-
 “ ments

“ ments of royalty, and preserved the freedom of the constitution,
 “ was too favourable to be lost.

“ On the tenth day of April, 1716, the Duke of Devonshire
 “ proposed, in the House of Lords, a bill for enlarging the con-
 “ tinuance of Parliament, and was seconded by the Earls of Dorset
 “ and Rockingham, the Duke of Argyle, the Lord Townshend,
 “ and all the chiefs of the Whig faction. It was opposed by the
 “ Earls of Abingdon, Nottingham, and Powlet : but important as was
 “ the subject of the bill, weighty as were the arguments, and obvious
 “ as were the reasons, urged against its necessity, expedience, or use,
 “ and also on the manifest evils which must attend it, the arguments
 “ served only to form a short debate, and the bill passed by a large
 “ majority, twelve peers only entering their protest against it : it met
 “ with the same success in the lower house : and thus the constitu-
 “ tion, from its mistaken or pretended friends, received a more fatal
 “ injury than it had ever received from all the encroachments of
 “ power, from the fatal period of the Conquest to the present times.”

To this positive violation of the constitution, the great negative injustice in the rejection of that bill which opportunity presented for limiting the number of the peerage, is very suitably subjoined.

The stupendous effects of the South Sea Scheme, the solid and so fatally verified objections against it, the acts which laid the foundation of a mischief so unexampled—these great materials are used in the

happiest and most improving manner; and together with the known licentiousness of the times, in which these evils made their appearance, furnish too convincing ground to believe it truly asserted of the æra of the Revolution, that, instead of introducing a more correct and regular system of manners than that of the abandoned reign of Charles the Second, “ it only added to the profligacy then prevailing, the “ meaner vices of sordid rapacity and venal corruption.”

After the septennial act, the historian justly observes it is no kind of wonder to see that in time of peace, on pretence of fear and apprehension from the Pretender, a standing army of above sixteen thousand men was put into the hands of the King; military government and martial law established at once, at discretion of the monarch, over so great and important a body of men in the midst of the community, and who upon every principle of true policy, constitutional reason, and common right, ought to have been on an indiscriminate footing of independent privileges and common interests with the rest of their fellow citizens; the mandates of men and the imperious hand of force made more powerful than the laws, the man and the citizen buried in the soldier, and the people tamely acquiescing in this monstrous innovation; by which it is easy to judge whether we are indebted to the “ attention, caution, and well grounded distrust of the “ people, for any law of the constitution yet remaining unviolated,” or merely to the moderation or timidity of our governors. So that the facts furnish an easy clue for determining on the justness of Mrs. Macaulay's observation.

But

But for the introduction of martial law, and the blessings of a standing army, we have now, as formerly, the admirable argument of political necessity suggested to us. Now, not to repeat the observation of our historian, that when any thing critical and alarming in the disposition of our neighbours requires us to be particularly on our guard, our naval force, which ought never to be neglected, is a security infinitely cheaper—as indeed it not only supports its own expences, but enriches the nation—not dangerous to our liberties, and more immediately useful than a land army can possibly be; the naval being a preventive force against the arrival of enemies, and the other as to actual use, at best only remedial when they are arrived;—not to say, that a well formed and disciplined militia, still continuing free citizens, and undebased by that condition of slavery which constitutes the grand distinction of an army denominated regular, is a far more suitable defence for the liberties of our country.—One would ask what kind of policy that is, which pretends to fight for freedom with servile weapons; which introduces despotism into the constitution as a pledge and safeguard to our political independence; and to use the words of a memorable protest in the year 1717, what reason have we not to believe, that “those persons are best prepared, and most easily tempted to strip others of their rights, who have already lost their own?”

Or how, as it was said on the bill for impressing seamen, can we dream of employing men to defend those liberties of which we have deprived them? Or what worse can happen to a nation by foreign power than destruction? What worse destruction than loss of liberty?

And what in the testimony of reason, and the experience of all ages and countries, more certainly destructive of liberty than a standing army with its necessary appendage of martial law in the time of peace; and sole legislative power in such important and most extensive instances vested in the executive magistrate? which in effect is constituting an ordinary and perpetual dictator, and formally lodging power in the appointed depositary of peaceful and free government to convert it at pleasure into sword law; and a trust the most cautiously limited into absolute despotism.

That the limitations in the act of settlement in the House of Hanover, providing against the nations being involved in wars for the king's foreign dominions, and restraining him from the temptations of personal partiality, that he might be present in his kingdom here, and vigilant in the execution of his office, that these truly salutary limitations should be overset by the Whigs, is a circumstance from which they can derive very little honour indeed, and fitter for a party of opposite professions.

To complete the scene comes the triple alliance between Great Britain, France, and Holland: and on this head, referring for the articles of the alliance to the work itself, I must again indulge myself in transcribing a part of what the Author has said of it.

“ The general commerce of many years would undoubtedly
 “ have made up for the inadequateness of the peace of
 Utrecht;

“ Utrecht; but it has ever been, and I believe ever will be, the bane
 “ of this country, while it exists as an independent society; to rush
 “ into unnecessary and expensive wars; to give up all the fruits of
 “ very dear bought conquests in the patching up of hasty treaties of
 “ peace; and when the nation is just emerging out of the poverty
 “ which war produces, the paroxysms of Quixote rage return; and
 “ we are again without the plea of necessity, or even rational cause,
 “ suddenly thrown into all the horrors and distresses of war.” I would
 only observe, which I think agrees with Mrs. Macaulay’s idea on the
 subject, that there is hardly, if at all, any rational cause of war,
 short of a necessary cause.

Still we are involved in the progress of corruption, whether the
 nation be at war or peace, and as the history proceeds, the obstruc-
 tions to that corruption insensibly, and with plenty of haste, dissolve
 before it. In such a period it is that we look around with anxiety,
 contemplating past events as future, for the timely exertions of pa-
 triotism: and worthy was the noble declaration of Lord Moleworth
 to be immortalised by a Macaulay, where he says, “ that the Swedes
 “ are authors of their own misfortune, by a tame submission to a
 “ despotic, tyrannical prince; and by sacrificing their whole substance
 “ to enable him to carry on his unjust, rash, and ambitious designs;
 “ and that any nation who follows their example deserves their fate.”

But lest we should suspect that corruption was the only cause, the
 sagacious and impartial historian allows its weight to a zeal, though
 not

not according to knowledge in the extent of its apprehensions and choice of its measures for the Protestant Succession: a zeal which thought of no better means of keeping out Popery, and defeating the ruined cause of the Pretender, than to suffer and even promote the growth of arbitrary power, the vitiating of men's consciences, the debasing of the national spirit of independence, the ruin of prudence, morality, and public happiness; and all the worst of evils for which Popery or the Pretender was to be kept out.

Amongst other effects of these panic terrors, the history observes the suspension of public liberty *for a year*, which, if it did no other good, helped to familiarize the easy and good natured inhabitants of this country to a method of proceeding which a little startled them in the days of its novelty; but which doubtless they will soon learn to be perfectly innocent in its consequences. And a very hopeful rise it had upon the silly cabals of a ruined party, and the gasconades of an exiled adventurer.

On the affairs of Atterbury, I do not know whether it is not impertinent to say that I concur with the historian, in thinking that the evidence which he offered in his defence ought to have been admitted; and that the proceedings on his trial do not seem to have been very conducive to public safety, or the regular process of constitutional justice.

What Lord Cowper is afterwards observed to have said, in comparing the case of Lord Clarendon with this, "that Lord Clarendon's crimes were too apparent to need any witnesses," has been on many public occasions greatly perverted. And sometimes the iniquity and shamelessness of a charge has been made to serve the purpose of excluding innocence from the protection of a fair trial. Whenever a man will abide trial, whenever an individual or body of men offer the examination of their cause to an impartial hearing, it is injustice of the highest and most dangerous kind to refuse to hear them: and for such injustice, on pretence that the crime was apparent, and that nobody wanted to be taught what every body knew, this nation bitterly suffers, and it is to be feared will more and more suffer. Lord Clarendon fled: and therefore could not complain of wanting that benefit which he chose to abandon.

For the apology made by the historian, with regard to the remaining part of the history of George the First, I refer to the work: only observing, that abject indeed is that situation of a people in which such a genius should despair of interesting the reader.

Superfeding therefore to observe on some intermediate particular, there is a just and delicate irony in the following passage; where speaking of a grant of supplies, without estimate of expence, carried by a majority of eighty-nine votes, the author subjoins "a proof of
 " the increasing confidence with which his majesty's reign was yearly
 " blessed: since on the former occasion hinted at above the minister
 carried

“ carried the question by a majority of four only.” And then continues, “ to shew you, my friend, that the Commons had some reasons
 “ for their conduct, the King had been graciously pleased, in his
 “ answer to the loyal address, to assure the two Houses, that he had
 “ no views of ambition to gratify, he had no thought of aggrandising
 “ himself, or extending any part of his dominions at the hazard
 “ and expence of the other; and as his honour was the common cause
 “ and concern of his subjects, their particular interests should upon
 “ all occasions be his peculiar care.”

A little farther the Author observes on a similar occasion, “ the
 “ granting money with a frugal hand, and the examining with strict-
 “ ness the public accounts, is you know, my friend, the great use and
 “ duty of Parliaments.” And a very proper appeal it is to that friend,
 who with a very few others seems to know at present, or consider any
 thing about the matter. So just a confidence have we in the unexampled
 wisdom and purity of our Parliament, that we can easily dispense
 with the consideration of what may be their duty; but if ever Parlia-
 ment in the reign of George—you will understand that I mean
 George the twentieth, or thereabouts, should forget they have a duty,
 it will not be very wonderful, if after the necessary time and prepara-
 tion for coming at such an important conclusion, the people should
 be disposed to forget of such a Parliament that it has an use, or at
 least should not think themselves bound to be at much expence to
 support such an use, but agree in considering them as a burthensome

part of the constitution, and the instruments by which the people are fleeced and beggared with impunity.

The course of the history, shortly after these generous votes of supply, gives occasion to the author of presenting us with a curious address of the then German—I beg pardon, I meant to say British Parliament, offering up their lives and fortunes for the service of the throne: and consequently, observes the author, the lives and fortunes of their constituents. Indeed upon these occasions it is the wisdom of so august a senate to be content to give the lives and fortunes of the people actually; and, as to their own, to be satisfied with dying or being impoverished, not *in propria personâ* but *virtually*; according to the catholic doctrine of fictitious representation.

In the midst of profuse preparations for war, without reason and without end, comes a peace and the death of George the First, of whose moral, intellectual, and social qualities, however varying and in some respects uncertain the estimate may be, his character as King of England may be decided by a single trait, if he was so hurt by the scarcely colourable opposition of raising supplies by Parliament, as to declare, in the words quoted from Lord Chesterfield, that he was come to England to be a begging King: which is explained by a paraphrase not at all too wide, “that he could not
“ command without asking, and issue out mandates to raise arbitrary
“ taxes by the royal authority singly.”

I now am advanced to the *sixth Letter*, which commences with a poignant and most merited censure on the impolicy, audacity, and infidelity of those ministers, who, in a long succession, had made the security of the government to consist in the beggary of the nation, for whose sake alone all true government subsists, and by whose confidence and opinion alone any government can have permanent security. The scheme was something like that much more innocent one recorded of Eumenes, borrowing money of those officers whom he suspected to be hostile to him, that they might preserve his life out of respect to their own money. But as it did not save the life of the general, so it apparently more than not saves—it destroys the constitution.

The progress of the national debt is rather remarkable, as marked in the several letters of this history, till at length in the year 1727, at the accession of George the Second, in somewhat less than forty years from the Revolution, it was risen to the enormous height of fifty millions—or about one third of its present magnitude.

Then follows an accurate and affecting recapitulation of the inroads on the constitution, in the interval between the death of Queen Anne and the accession of George the Second.

The incircumspect conduct of Parliament in the next reign with regard to the wording of our rapidly encreasing laws, and the ever gathering cloud of penalties on the subject, is noticed as it deserved to be.

As a member of the profession, I feel myself affected with the charge against the volumes of our law, and the conduct of my brethren in that order. I consider them as my friends from the natural attachment towards persons in one common employment with ones self; the law is to be revered more than they; but truth more than either.

There are certainly many needless, and some inexcusable tautologies, obscurities, and ambiguities in the volume of our law. But the uncertainty of it is, I think, considerably owing to other causes. To that unjustifiable finesse which colours, or suppresses facts from which the law must result; to that complicated state of society, in which many frauds, hard to be obviated, spring up; infinite arrangements of property, and innumerable causes of dispute; a multiplicity of new interests, and consequently in a great measure of new questions; the unavoidable imperfections of language, and various other causes independent of negligence, or intentional faults in the original formation of our statutes.

The following sentiments will surely be allowed uncontrovertible. And I will not injure them by any other expressions than those which the Author herself has used.

“ Every law relating to public, or private property, and in particular penal statutes, ought to be rendered so clear and plain, and promulged in such a manner to the public, as to give a full information

“ tion of its nature and contents to every citizen. And if the care of
 “ government does not extend to the proper education of the subject,
 “ and to their proper information on the nature of moral turpitude
 “ and legal crimes, and to the encouragement of virtue, with what
 “ face can they punish delinquency?” And I will not scruple to
 repeat in the animated terms which immediately are subjoined, “ If
 “ on the contrary the citizens, by the oppression of heavy taxes, are
 “ rendered incapable, by the utmost exertion of honest industry, of
 “ bringing up or providing for a numerous family;—if every en-
 “ couragement is given to licentiousness, for the purpose of amusing
 “ and debasing the minds of the people, or for raising a revenue on
 “ the vices of the subject;—is punishment in this case better than
 “ legal murder? or to use a strong yet adequate expression, is it better
 “ than infernal tyranny?”

It is easily accountable amidst the corruptions of the Commons,
 the profusion and avarice of the government, and the shameless
 venality of men of education, high in rank and in most eminent trust,
 that the “ *only* laws which could possibly restrain the abuses of re-
 “ presentation, which could render the spirit of the constitution
 “ consistent with its forms, and fix dominion’s limits to its end——
 “ namely, laws to prevent pensioners from sitting in Parliament, and
 “ to restore the people to their ancient salutary privileges, by
 “ shortening the duration of Parliaments, should be rejected with
 “ disdain.”

In this crisis to be shewn a man of learning and understanding, an head of a Protestant, a Christian, an English Church, the avowed advocate of corruption, is to be shewn a most unnatural prodigy. Who will not agree with the author, if he retains the sound principles of judgement in any degree, that any argument against an independent House of Commons, independent with regard to the crown or ministerial influence, for the constituted cannot be independent of the constituent or the effect of the cause, is necessarily good to prove the expedience of no House of Commons at all, or in other words, of simple unmasked despotism?

The answer to the enquiry, where was the voice of the people, the thunder of national resentment, the salutary terrors of public vengeance, is I fear too just: that they were in a state of indolence, intoxication, and genuine native insensibility strangely combined, that they were as their fathers had been, and their posterity were and are, and too probably will be.

The opposition to Sir Robert Walpole's excise scheme, from the injudicious grounds on which that opposition was formed, and the intemperance with which it was conducted, together with the inadvertence which there seems to have been to the parts really exceptionable, appears very suitable to these complicated disorders of the people.

The rejection of the scheme, which is commended by the judicious author, and was proposed by Sir John Barnard in those days, for
I
raising

raising money by annuities, and the satisfaction of the people under the dismissal of his well concerted expedient for the gradual and easy redemption of the national debt, seems another instance of this national dimness. And yet they would not trust wholly to a people whose eyes were but half open; but very industriously contrived in the next memorable act, which the historian relates, to take care that in their very diversions they should see no more, and no farther, than the ministry should hold it expedient to permit.

But even at this time the *sang froid* of ministry and of the nation wanted much of being perfectly settled; it was beginning to stagnate and to curdle; but corruption had not yet laid its petrefying mace with full effect; or acquired the power, by once calling the question, without argument, or the ceremony of any thing to shew like it, of binding up all debate, and silencing all opposition. The contrary of this the Author, in this *sixth historical Letter*, shews still to have been the case in some measure.

Then too was a time in which the impressing of seamen was so far from being justified as an ordinary, salutary, and inoffensive branch of the prerogative, that even the minister of corruption acknowledged it illegal and unconstitutional: and Parliament, notwithstanding the utmost efforts of government to obtain their sanction for such a purpose, rejected, as became their duty to themselves and their constituents, with high indignation, a bill prepared, to use the just and strong language of the letter now before my eyes, “prepared for

“ reducing seamen, watermen, fishermen, and lightermen, to a state
 “ of abject slavery.”

The remaining part of the *last historical Letter* of the present volume exhibits such a sketch of the grossness and despicable evasions which serve the business of a minister in a corrupted state; of dishonourable and insecure peace, and war immeasurably expensive, ill conducted, inglorious; of pitiful prejudices of party, base apostasies, and unblushing prostitution, as may serve to exemplify the blessings of that admirable invention of modern times, which to avoid the inconvenience of the people meddling with their own affairs, introduced a system almost unimagined by antiquity, an ingenious complication of the most oppressive and corrupting forms of government; or, as the Author of the excellent letters on which I have been observing, says in another place, “ a monarchy supported
 “ by an aristocracy.”

The character of Lord Bath, which concludes the *Letter*, is a memorable example, strikingly delineated, of the ascendancy of vanity, and selfish interests of the very lowest kind, over ambition, shame, honour, and even over the better kinds of vanity itself. The reception he met, even in those days of more than incipient corruption, is a strong instance that shame for a while may survive virtue, though it never long survives it; and the concluding sentence is in general no less verified by experience than founded in the noblest principles, “ that the Almighty Ruler of the universe will not suffer
 “ defective

“ defective characters to be instruments in so glorious a work, as
 “ breaking the yoke of tyranny; nor permit men who are without
 “ the principle of virtue, to enjoy for any length of time its never
 “ failing rewards, or even to carry its externals to the grave.”

Thus far have I ventured, with such ideas and observations as occurred to me, without entering into a minute investigation of the excellent work which has occasioned these remarks by the strict rules of critical analysis: and this from my want of leisure, spirits at present, and I fear capacity at any time, for the just and full execution of such a plan; but very far from any distrust of the credit of the performance, if brought by any person of sufficient ability to the severest test: which I think would rather enlarge and establish its character. However in the close of these observations I shall take the liberty of extracting the sentiments of some of the most approved judges of antiquity, upon the composition and end of history, that having in some faint degree endeavoured to shew what this history is, and then in a detached manner what history in general should be, according to the sentiments of some of the most cultivated and enlarged minds, I may leave the application where it ought to be left.

The first law of history then, is—not to dare saying any thing untrue, nor to be afraid of uttering any necessary truth: to be above the influence of party affection and party prejudice. It has also these laws:—not barely to recite facts and dates, which in the sentiment of Tacitus is to write annals and not history; but to investigate causes
 and

and consequences, the life, the manners, the principles of men; the motives, the conduct, and the events of action; the changes in laws, constitution, and national temper; the character of the people and of the times; the rise of a virtuous state, by unremitting perseverance and incorruptible integrity; or at a more advanced period, the relaxation of discipline, the insensible progress of corruption, the condition of an empire vitiated in its spirit, disordered in its form, labouring under its own unwieldy magnitude, and unable to support either its vices or its remedies. To present the most vivid images of universal nature, with regard to civil life; and thus enable men to anticipate experience; to make evident the imbecillity of vice, and the dignity and stability of virtue; the miseries of tyranny and servitude, and the glorious happiness of just and equitable government, founded in common consent and directed to common good. To supply the defects of laws and political societies, by divesting injustice of its extrinsic advantages of rank and station; bringing it before the great tribunal of truth and virtue, and subjecting it to the unprejudiced judgment of posterity: and rescuing injured patriotism from the unjust calumnies to its reward of immortality.

The style of history I think is generally agreed to require a medium between common discourse and oratorical composition, neither descending so low as the former, nor allowing of that pomp which is adapted to the latter; but characterized by a tempered gravity and calm majesty; concise; simple in the narrative—which is its proper

and denominative part;—flowing, but without affectation, not vague or redundant in the periods; connected; rarely figurative, and never ostentatiously rhetorical; rising according to the importance of the subject; argumentative, pathetic, sublime; subsiding with gracefulness and ease, but no where condescending to mean diction, or stooping to trivial occurrences, though at the same time thinking nothing trifling, of which the consequences are important, or which throws a light upon secret motives and occasions of public events: faithful, but not servile to the order of time; sagacious in the selection, and happily attentive in the arrangement of dependent facts. Not fettered to a pre-imagined system, nor on the other hand disconcerted at every new appearance, but deducing from authentic and well-weighed evidence, just, uniform, and systematic conclusions; and centering all her efforts in the great object of improving civil society, and suggesting exemplary precautions and approved security for the good of human kind.

I now, in the conclusion of this letter, have increased cause to feel what I apprehended in the beginning, of its inadequateness to the subject, and to the person to whom it is addressed. I will not insult the public or dishonour myself by pretending, that in a publication, and upon such a work, and addressed to you, I have not endeavoured to use my best intention, and to employ to its utmost the measure of that capacity, with which Providence has been pleased to intrust me. To say that I could have made these observations better if I had thought

it worth my while, would be, not a decent apology, but a fault aggravated by presumption; besides that it would not be easily credited, a work thus circumstanced should be willingly defective. Such as they are I hope the public will accept them: and I should have been happy to have made them more worthy of their acceptance; of the respectable opinion which suggested the attempt, and encouraged the making of them public; and of the name, which as it will naturally immortalize whatever may be right in them, is not likely to suffer their defects to sink into oblivion. My consolation in this however is that the very defects in the comment, are in a great measure a tacit panegyric on the original work; from the high and extensive excellence of which, it is obvious they must result. I might, in addition to this sufficient and fully apparent cause, subjoin more private and incidental reasons, affecting the writer of this letter; I might alledge some causes of professional duty; I might speak of the time and situation of mind in which they were written; partly of anxious suspense for the ever dear survivor of my justly honoured parents; and partly under the recent affliction from her death: which while reason and religion teach me to bear as a man, and to comfort myself with the remembrance of her virtues, my persuasion of her happiness, and the hope of sharing it with her, they do not forbid me to feel. With sincere wishes for the health and felicity of your patriotic friend, and of whatever is likely to conduce to the public good, which will naturally include at the same time in an eminent degree, the wish of a long continuance of health to you, permit me to subscribe myself, with the truest

veneration

veneration and esteem, and the justest acknowledgement for the public benefit of your works, and the personal honour and satisfaction of your acquaintance, and with a sense of my happiness in the privilege of being permitted to consider myself in the number of your friends,

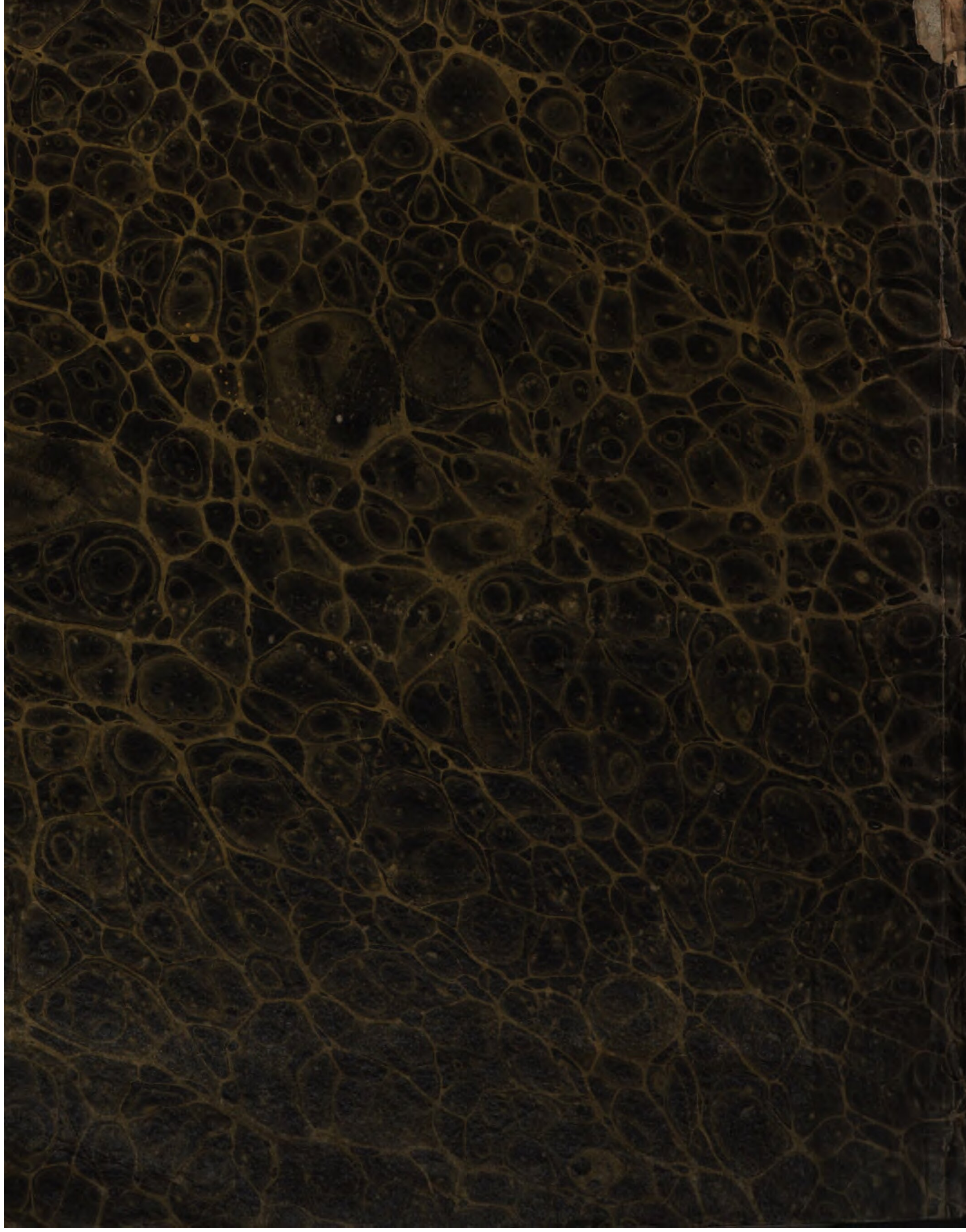
MADAM,

Your obedient humble servant,

And most obliged, most respectful admirer,

March 5, 1778,
Queen Square, Bloomsbury.

CAPEL LOFFT.



Lofft, Capel,

Observations on Macaulay's history of England from the Revolution to the
Resignation of Robert Walpole

London 1778

4 Brit. 70 r

urn:nbn:de:bvb:12-bsb10225255-7